In the claims:

Please cancel claims 1-21.

Please add claims 22-41.

      1. (Cancelled)

      2. (Cancelled)

      3. (Cancelled)

      4. (Cancelled)

      5. (Cancelled)

      6. (Cancelled)

      7. (Cancelled)

      8. (Cancelled)

      9. (Cancelled)

      10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (New)   A batch processing engine comprising:

a design tool subsystem operable on a first computer and configured to generate, based on user input, first specifications for a batch application;

a specification server subsystem configured to store the first specifications;

a processing subsystem operable on the first computer or a second computer and configured to execute the batch application based on the first specifications; and

a middleware subsystem configured to communicate the first specifications within the batch processing engine.

23. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the design tool subsystem is configured to generate a template based on the first specifications and wherein the specification server subsystem is configured to store the template.

24. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 23 further comprising another design tool subsystem configured to generate, based on the template, second specifications for the batch application.

25. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 24 further comprising another processing subsystem configured to execute the batch application based on the second specifications.

26. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the batch application comprises a report application.

27. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 further comprising an input subsystem configured to perform input functions for the batch application.

28. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 further comprising an output subsystem configured to perform output functions for the batch application.

29. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 further comprising a database subsystem configured to provide access for the batch application to a database.

30. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the middleware subsystem is configured to communicate the first specifications from the design tool subsystem to the specification server subsystem.

31. (New)   The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the middleware subsystem is configured to communicate the first specifications from the specification server subsystem to the processing subsystem.

32. (New)   A method of operating a batch processing engine, the method comprising:

in a design tool subsystem operable on a first computer, generating, based on user input, first specifications for a batch application;

storing the first specifications in a specification server subsystem;

in a processing subsystem operable on the first computer or a second computer, executing the batch application based on the first specifications; and

communicating the first specifications within the batch processing engine using a middleware subsystem.

33. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising:

in the design tool subsystem, generating a template based on the first specifications; and

storing the template in the specification server subsystem.

34. (New)   The method of claim 33 further comprising in another design tool subsystem, generating second specifications for the batch application based on the template.

35. (New)   The method of claim 34 further comprising in another processing subsystem, executing the batch application based on the second specifications.

36. (New)   The method of claim 32 wherein the batch application comprises a report application.

37. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising in an input subsystem, performing input functions for the batch application.

38. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising in an output subsystem, performing output functions for the batch application.

39. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising in a database subsystem, providing access for the batch application to a database.

40. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising communicating the first specifications from the design tool subsystem to the specification server subsystem.

41. (New)   The method of claim 32 further comprising communicating the first specifications from the specification server subsystem to the processing subsystem.